

DENTON MASSEY

915 KING STREET WEST

TORONTO

December  
Fifth,  
1930.

Dear Stewart:

I am ashamed to say that I am surveying your letter of October 11th which I find unanswered. It is so easy to let slip writing to those of whom one thinks a great deal. It does seem a pity, doesn't it, that this merry little sphere of ours sets such a dizzy pace that we have so little time to enjoy the company of those whose presence is so acceptable.

Occasionally I hear of your work from friends in Elizabeth and am delighted to learn of your progress. I feel confident that you are destined for big things before you relinquish your ministry.

The Class is pounding along in great style and we are more than delighted with our new place of meeting - the Metropolitan Church. I think our Service is of the type which would appeal to you more than ever. It has altered distinctly in calibre and, we all feel, is much more effective.

We have recently made a great addition to it with the assistance of Dr. Fricker, who presides at the console of the great organ each week. He is a magnificent musician and is playing on the best which Canada has to offer in Cassavant organs.

A couple of weeks ago I found that you were not on our regular mailing list as a member of the Radio Audience Club, which Club I may have told you we instituted last April and which now boasts of just under three thousand members. It makes rather a nice contact, and many seem pleased with it.

How are your family? I do hope they are flourishing and that they have escaped

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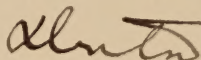
- 2 -

the usual Fall run of colds and so on.

Please give our best to Ann,  
and, of course, accept it for yourself. We  
hope to see you soon.

As always,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Denton', followed by a long horizontal line.

Rev. Stewart M. Robinson,  
Second Presbyterian Church,  
East Jersey Street,  
Elizabeth, N.Y.



First Presbyterian Church

Fifth Avenue & Chestnut Street

Roselle, N. J.

HERBERT K. ENGLAND, D.D., Minister

THERESA CAPELL, Director of  
Religious Education

December 12, 1930.

Rev. S. M. Robinson,  
Second Presbyterian Church,  
Elizabeth, N. J.

My dear Mr. Robinson:

I am writing for some information. The Session of our church is in the process of considering the matter of permitting dancing in the parish house. There seems to be a rather sharp difference of opinion and both groups are inclined to maintain their point of view. I was requested to write to some of the men hereabouts to ask them if they have had any experience in this matter, and if so, would they be good enough to tell us frankly what it is.

If you included this in your church activities, will you please let me know your reaction in the light of your experience. Does it help the general program? Is it a matter of concern as to control? Does it create a difference of opinion among your people? There may be other angles that occur to you.

Appreciating your reply and with good wishes,

Yours ever,

Herbert K. England



England: -

My dear Brother: -

Yours is a real problem. I have much to say and will be careful to be as brief as possible.

(1) We do NOT have any dancing on our premises nor are any dances conducted under our auspices.

(2) The request has never come from either young or old. *(i.e. while I have been here)*

(3) I am sure it would be overwhelmingly tabled by either young or old.

~~(4) My own personal experience~~

(4) My own personal experience may help you ~~personally.~~

A- In Cleveland 1919-1921 I was assistant in the Covenant Church with 1500 members, a hundred thousand dollar yearly budget and on the campus of Western Reserve. I conducted ~~dances~~ dances, not often but upon occasion. A good number always attended but no good result came of it. No manifest evil appeared either, be it n said. It was simply a dead letter. I do not think anything like that goes on now. I get the calendar weekly and have never seen a word of it for ten yrs. In fact I think it died while I was there. Granted I was not an ideal dancing master, however I always danced myself while in college and after, but never was a devotee, *+ do not at all any more.*

B- In Lockport we completed a beautiful S.S. addition and parish house for about ninety thousand just before I came away. Shiny floors and a fine group of young people suggested dances and one of our ELDERS proposed it. The YOUNG PEOPLE turned it down. Why? A Cong. Church in city had a fine ~~xxxxxxx~~ C.E. and they ruined it by their dances. Not the viciousness but the social complications that arose. The best people spiritually do not dance, as a RULE. The great dance advocates are USUALLY light weights mentally and spiritually. I am careful to qualify because the elder who proposed it ~~is~~ was as fine and consecrated a man as I know.



But dances produced 'wall flowers' and the church became unwittingly a vehicle of cruelty and oppression. Naturally these people dropped out. One thing and another came up from the excitement of these dances which alienated this one and that, first from one another and so from the church, until the outfit was flat.

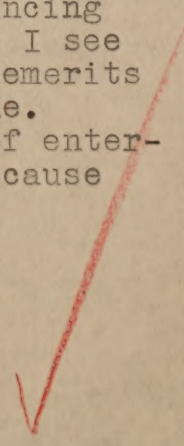
Our Presb. young people took a leaf from that and said 'no dances' for us.

C- I understand it was discussed here once before I came, ~~When~~ the Recreation Hall was opened I guess. But a concrete floor must have been one good argument against it if no better was given.

(5) You may know of E.C. (Ted) Mercer great young peoples' worker for 20 yrs been about colleges etc. Is an Episcopalian, smokes and thinks Christianity ought to ~~xxxxxx~~ go along with a 'sane normal life'. He is dead against dances in connection with church, and gave me dozens of cases from Episcopal Churches. One will suffice: a rector had to reprimand the daughter of his leading vestryman on the floor one night. You know what that produced in the way of trouble.

(6) I have had testimony brought to ~~pe~~ me concerning the situation in Elizabeth where dancing is allowed. It is no argument for starting. I do not pass it on, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ only give you my word that it is 'agin dancing'.

(7) I hesitate to 'give advice' to one as wise and capable, but I have suggested to others faced with this problem that they see to it that the question is debated thus: 'Is dancing or dances a good thing for OUR CHURCH?'. As I see it you will not get far on the merits or demerits of dancing. That is not precisely the issue. We are churches. We don't run many sorts of enterprises not because they are wicked, but because they are not our job.



Finally and 'eighthly' my experience has been that in the long run the spiritual appeal is the sure appeal. I have never 'fought' dances only tried and happily as I see it helped to 'drown the idea' in a flood of other and I think better things. Dancing in churches and under church auspices robs the church of a vital something. *Lady* A friend of our family's living far from here, a friend of my parents in fact once gave this testimony. Their minister danced and they had dances, and the wife who often engaged in these dances said: 'But I would never go to (this minister) in trouble ~~or~~ for any deep spiritual need'. That is the penalty, uselessness for the main thing.

Yours fraternally,